

nor evil, and cannot speake for it selfe, God speake for it and blesse it. Then said he, *Now I have nigh done, one stroke will make my wise husbandesse, my deare children fatherlesse, and my poore servants masterlesse, and separate me from my deare brother and all my friends, but let God be to you and them all in all.*

After that, going to take off his doublet, and to make himselfe unreadie, he said, *I thank God I am no more afraid of death, nor daunted with any discouragement rising from any feares, but doe as cheerfully put off my doublet at this time, as ever I did when I went to bed.* Then he put off his doublet, and wound up his haire with his hands, and put on a white cap.

Then hee called, *Where is the man that should doe this last office?* (meaning the Executioner) *call him to me.* When he came and askt him forgiveuesse, hee told him hee forgave him and all the world. Then kneeling downe by the block, hee went to prayer againe himselfe, the Bishop of Armach kneeling on the one side, and the Minister on the other; to the which Minister after prayer, hee turned himselfe, and spake some few words softly, having his hands lifted up: this Minister closed his hands with his; then bowing himselfe to the earth, to lay his head on the block, he told the Executioner that hee would first lay downe his head to try the fitnessse of the block, and take it up againe, before he would lay it downe for good and all, and so he did: and before hee laid it downe againe, he told the Executioner that he would give him warning when to strike, by stretching forth his hands; and then layd downe his neck on the block, stretching out his hands, the Executioner struck off his head at one blow, then tooke the head up in his hands, and shewed it to all the people, and said, *God save the King.*

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THE TWO LAST SPEECHES

OF
THOMAS WENTWORTH,
late Earle of *Strafford*, and Deputy
of *Ireland*. The one in the Tower,
the other on the Scaffold on Tower-
hill, *May the 12th. 1641.*



*His speech in the Tower to the Lords, before
hee went to Execution.*

Right honorable, and the rest, you are now come to convey mee to my death, I am willing to dye, which is a thing no more then all our Predecessors have done, and a debt that our Posterity must in their due time discharge, which since it can bee no way avoyded, it ought the lesse to be feared; for that which is common to all, ought not to bee intollerable to any: It is the Law of Nature, the tribute of the flesh, a remedy from all worldly cares and troubles; and to the truly penitent, a perfect path to blessednesse. And there is but one death, though severall waies unto it: mine is not naturall, but enforced by the Law and Justice: it hath beene said that the Lawes vexee only the meaner sort of people, but the mighty are able to withstand them: it is not so with me, for to the Law I submit my selfe, and confesse that I receive nothing but Justice: for he that pollitickely intendeth good to a Common-wealth, may be called a just man, but he that practiseth either for his owne profit, or any other sinister ends, may be well termed a delinquent person; neither is delay in punishment any priviledge for pardon. And moreover, I ingenuously confesse with *Cicero*, that the death of the bad is the safety of the good that be alive.

Let no man trust either in the favour of his Prince, the friendship

and consanguinity of his Peeres, much lesse in his owne wisdom and knowledge, of which I ingenuously confesse I have beene ~~too~~ confident. Kings, as they are men before God, so they are Gods before men, and I may say with a great man once in this Kingdom, *Had I strived to obey my God as faithfully, as I sought to honour my King fraudulently, I had stood and not fallen.* Most happie and fortunate is that Prince, who is as much for his justice feared, as for his goodnesse beloved: For the greater that Princes are in power above other, the more they ought in vertue to excell other; and such is the royall Sovereigne whom I late served.

For my Peeres, the correspondence that I had with them during my prosperitie, was to me very delightfull and pleasing, and heere they have commiserated my ruine, I have plentifully found, who (for the most generous of them) I may boldly say, though they have detested the fact, yet they have pitied the person delinquent; the first in their loyaltie, the last in their charity: ingenuously confessing, that never any subject, or peere of my ranke, had ever that helpe of Councell, that benefit of time, or a more free and legall triall than I have had: of the like to which, none of my predecessors hath had so much favour from his Prince, so much sufferance from the people, in which I comprehend the understanding Commons, not the many headed monster, Multitude: but I have offended, am sentenced, and must now suffer.

And for my too much confidence in my supposed wisdom and knowledge, therein have beene the most deceived: For hee that is wise to himselfe, and knowes by others faults to correct his owne offences, to be truly wise, is to be Secretaries to our selves; for it is meerely folly to reveale and intimate thoughts to strangers: wisdom is the most precious Gemme with which the minde can bee adorned, and learning the most famous thing for which a man ought to be esteemed, and true wisdom teacheth us to doe well, as to speake well: in the first I have failed, for *the wisdom of man is foolishnesse with God.*

For knowledge, it is a thing indifferent both to good and evill, but the best knowledge is for a man to know himselfe; hee that doth so, shall esteeme of himselfe but little, for he considereth from whence hee came, and wherunto he must, hee regardeth not the vaine pleasures of this life, he exalteth God, and strives to live in his feare; but hee that knoweth not himselfe is wilfull in his owne waies, unprofitable in his life, unfortunate in his death, and so am I. But the reason why I sought at attaine unto it is this: I have read

that he that knoweth not that which hee ought to know, is a bruit beaft amongst men: he that knoweth more then he ought to know, is a man amongst beafts: but hee that knoweth all that may bee knowne, is God amongst men. To this I much aspired, in this I much failed; *Vanitie of vanities, all is but vanitie.*

I have heard the people clamour and cry out, saying, That through my occasion the times are bad, I wish that when I am dead they may prove better: most true it is, that there is at this time a great storme impending (God in his mercy avert it.) And since it is my particular lot, like *Jonah*, to be cast into the sea, I shall thinke my life well spent, to appease Gods wrath, and satisfie the peoples malice.

O what is eloquence more than aire? fashioned with an articulate and distinct sound, when it is a speciall vertue to speake little and well, and silence is oft the best oratorie; for fooles in their dumbnesse may be accounted wise: It hath power to make a good matter seeme bad, and a bad cause appeare good: but mine was to mee unprofitable, and like the Cypresse trees, which are great and tall, but altogether without fruit.

What is honour? but the first step to disquietnesse, and power is still waited on by envie, neither hath it any priviledge against infamy. It is held to be the chiefe part of honour, for a man to joyne to his office and calling, curtesie and affabilitie, commiseration and pitie: for thereby he draweth to him with a kinde of compulsion, the hearts of the multitude. But that was the least part of my study, which now makes me call to mind, that the greater the persons are in authority, the sooner they are catcht in any delinquency, and their smallest crimes are striven to be made capitall, the smallest spot seemes great in the finest linnen, and the least flaw is soonest found in the richest Diamond. But high and noble spirits finding themselves wounded, grieve not so much at their owne paine and perplexitie, as at the deriding and scotting of their enemy: but for mine owne part, though I might have many in my life, I hope to finde none in my death.

Amongst other things which pollute and contaminate the minds of great spirits, there is none more hainous than Ambition, which is seidome unaccompanied without Avarice: Such, to possesse their ends, care not to violate the Lawes of Religion, and Reason, and to breake the bounds of Modesty and Equitie, with the nearest eyes of Consanguinitie, and Amitie; of which as I have been guilty, so I crave at Gods hands forgiveness. It is a Maxime in Philosophy,

that ambitious men can never be good Counsellours to Princes ; the desire of having more is common to great Lords, and a desire of Rule a great cause of their Ruine.

My Lords, I am now the hopelesse President, may I be to you all an happy example : For Ambition devoureth gold, and drinketh blood, and climbeth so high by other mens heads, that at the length in the fall it breaketh its own neck : therefore it is better to live in humble content, than in high care and trouble : For more precious is want with honesty, than wealth with infamy : For what are wee but meere vapours, which in a serene Element ascend high, and upon an instant like Smeak, vanish into nothing : or like Ships without Pilots, tost up and downe upon the Seas by contrary winds and tempests. But the good husbandman thinks better of those eares of Corne, which bow downe, and grow crooked, than those which are straight and upright, because he is assured to finde more store of graine in the one than in the other. Thus all men know, yet of this, how few make use : The defect whereof must be now my paine : may my suffering prove to others profit.

For what hath now the favour of my Prince, the familiarity with my Peeres, the volubility of a tongue, the strength of my memory, my learning, or knowledge, my honours, or Offices, my power, and potency, my riches, and treasure, (all these the especiall gifts, both of Nature, and Fortune ; what have all these profited mee ? Blessings I acknowledge, though by God bestowed upon man ; yet not all of them together upon many : yet by the Divine providence, the most of them met in me : of which had I made happy use, I might still have flourish't, who now am forc'd immaturly to fall.

I now could wish, (but that *utinam* is too late) that God with his outward goodnesse towards me had so commixed his inward grace, that I had choosed the *medium* path, neither inclining to the right hand, nor deviating to the left ; but like *Icarus* with my waxen wings, fearing by too low a flight to moisten them with the Waves : I soared too high, and too neare the Sunne, by which they being melted ; I ayning at the highest, am precipitated to the lowest : and am made a wretched prey to the Waters : But I who before built my house upon the sand, have now settled my hopes upon the Rock my Saviour : by whose onely merits my sole trust is, that whatsoever becomes of my body, yet in this bosome my soule may be Sanctuaried.

Nimrod would have built a Tower to reach up to heaven, and call'd it *Babel* ; but God turned it to the confusion of Languages, and

dissipation of the people. *Pharaoh* kept the Children of *Israel* in bondage, and after having freed them, in his great pride would have made them his prey ; but God gave them a dry and miraculous passage, and *Pharaoh* and his Hoast a warry Sepulcher, *Belshazzar* feasted his Princees and Prostitutes, who drunke healths in the Vessells taken from the Temple. but the hand of God writ upon the wall, *Mene, Tekel, Phoraz*, and that night before morning was both his Kingdome and life taken from him : Thus God lets men goe on a great while in their owne devices, but in the end it proves their owne ruine and destruction, never suffering them to effect their desired purposes : therefore let none presume upon his power, glory in his greatnesse, or be too confident in his riches : These things were written for our Instruction, of which the living may make use, the dying cannot ; but wit and unfruitfull wisdom are the next neighbours to folly.

There can be no greater vanity in the world, than to esteeme the world, which regardeth no man ; and to make slight account of God, who greatly respecteth all men ; and there can be no greater folly in man, than by much travell to increase his goods, and pamper his body, and in the interim with vaine delights and pleasures, to lose his soule. It is a great folly in any man to attempt a bad beginning, in hope of a good ending ; and to make that proper to one, which was before common to all, is meere indiscretion, and the beginning of discord, which I positively wish may end in this my punishment.

O how small a proportion of earth will containe my body. when my high mind could not be confined within the spacious compasse of two Kingdomes: But my houre draweth on, and I conclude with the Psalmist, not ayming at any one man in particular, but speaking for all in generall : *How long will you Judges be corrupted ? how long will yee cease to give true Iudgement ? &c. Blessed is the man that doth not walke in the Councell of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornfull, therefore they shall not stand in the Iudgement, nor sinners in the Assembly of the righteous, &c.*

About the houre of twelve a Clock the aforesaid Lord of *Straford* was conveyed to the Scaffold on *Tower-Hill*, where was a Court of Guard made by the severall Companies of Souldiers of the Cite of *London*, and the Hamlets of the Tower on each side as he passed to the Scaffold : before marched the Marshalls men to make way, then the Sheriffs of *Londons* Officers with their Halberds; after them the Kings Guard, or Warders of the Tower : Next came one of

his Gentlemen, bare headed, in mourning Habit, the Lord *Strafford* following him clad in black Cloath, with diverse others in the same habit, which were his attendance; then the Lord Bishop of *Armagh*, and other good Divines; with the Sheriffes of *London*, and divers honourable Parsonages.

When he came to the Scaffold, he there shewed himselfe on each side in full view to all people, and made this short speech, with as much alacrity of Spirit, as a mortall man could expresse, *viz.*



His Speech on the SCAFFOLD.

MY Lord Primate of *Ireland*, and the rest of these Gentlemen, it is a very great comfort to me to have your Lordship by mee this day, and I doe give the Lord hartly thanks, in regard I have beene knowne to you so long, I shall be very glad to be heard of you in a few words which I doubt will not be. My Lord I come hither by the good will and pleasure of Almighty God to pay the last debt I owe to sin, that is death, and through death hope to receive eternall life.

Being disturbed sate down and inquired the matter (some said) the souldiers kept a stirre, he replied, if they would be quiet, all the rest would bee so, I desired to have had it more quiet but could not, so sate down againe.

Then rising up said, my Lord, if I might be so much beholding to you as to use a few words, I shall be much bound unto you, I say, my Lord Primate I thinke my selfe happie to have your Lordship by me now I am to pay that debt of sinne, I am come hither to submitt to that Judgement that is to proceed against me, I do it freely, willingly, and quietly, I do freely forgive all the world, with a forgiveness that is not spoken from the teeth outward, as the proverb is, but from the heart, that I speake it in the presence of Almighty God, before whom I stand, there is not so much as a displeasing

thought in me against any creature, I thanke God I may say truly too, and my conscience beares me witnesse, that in all my services, since I have had the honour to serve his Majestie in any imployment, I never had any thing in my heart but the joynt and individuall prosperity of King and people; I say I never had an evill intent against the good of the people, if it hath beene my fortune to bee misunderstood, it is the common portion of all in this world to erre; the righteous Judgement we must looke for hereafter when we must be judged by another.

There is one thing I desire to cleare my self of, and I hope I shall have your Christi in charity in the behalfe of it, I did ever thinke that the Parliaments of England was the happiest constitution that any Kingdome did ever live under, and under God the best meanes to make King and people happie; so farre have I beene from beeing against Parliaments. For my death, I doe heare acquitt all the world, and beseech the God of Heaven hartily to forgive them.

My Lord Primate, I am very glad that his Majestie conceives me not meriting so severe and heavy a punishment, as the uttermost execution of this sentence, and doe infinitely rejoyce in this mercy of his, & I beseech God returne it upon him that he may finde mercie when he hath most neede.

I doe desire the well-fare of this Kingdome, and ever did it in my prosperitie; I did it living, and now dying it is my wish.

And I would have every man to lay his hand to his heart, and seriously consider, whether the beginning of the happinesse of a Kingdome should be written in Letters of blood; and I desire that all may be forgiven unto the least drop of my blood, and that the least drop of my blood may never rise up against any; for I feare, you are in the wrong way.

Now my Lord, I here profess my selfe, that I doe dye an obedient sonne to the Church of *England*, I pray God that prosperitie and happinesse ever be unto it. And whereas

it is objected, if it be an objection worthy of Answering, concerning my inclinig to Popery, this I declare that never since I was two and twenty yeares old, and now that I am going into forty-nine, that ever I had any inclination unto it, and I cannot remember that ever any had the boldnesse to suggest me to any such thing in any kinde, and so I submit my selfe to Almightye G o d, going the way that all flesh must goe.

I desire that I may be forgiven by every man for my rash or unadvised words or deeds, and I desire that I may have silence of you, and that all will joyne with me in Prayer to All-mightie G o d for mee, so my Lord, farewell, and all the things in this world, farewell; and let mee have the Prayers of all you that heare me this day; I hope wee shall all meet in Heaven, and live eternally, there to receive the accomplishment of all things that Christ hath purchased for us, so even so, Lord Jesus bleſſe you all, and be mercifull to mee.



A Letter to a Lady.

MAdam, Although there be some discovery made knowne, yet what wee intend is secure; you must send too thousand pounds speedily; no danger, lesse difficultie to compasse as yet; you must remaine secret; Remember your oath; wee shall slay the Beast with many heads, and destroy the devils brood, before they dreame or mistrust; burne this Letter; your reward shall be in Heaven.

